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Source: *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 95, No. 4 (Oct., 2002), pp. 373-393

Published by: Cambridge University Press on behalf of the [Harvard Divinity School](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4150727>

Accessed: 15/12/2010 14:27

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Cyrus the Messiah? The Historical Background to Isaiah 45:1*

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According to Isaiah 45:1, Cyrus is YHWH's anointed, his Messiah:

כִּי-אָמַר יְהֹוָה לְמַשִּׁיחֵו לְכַוֵּן אֲשֶׁר-הַחֹזֶקֶת בַּיְמֵינוֹ

Thus says YHWH to his anointed, to Cyrus whom I took by his right hand.

Scholars have long disputed this passage. Many agree with Charles Torrey and argue that all references to Cyrus should be removed as later additions; the prophet himself did not write them.¹ Other scholars assert that the name Cyrus is original, but admonish their readers not to interpret the title "anointed" as more than was intended. The act of anointing simply indicates a commission: Cyrus is to perform the office of king.² Still others take a third position and assert that references to

*This paper has benefited from conversations with Baruch A. Levine, Tikva Frymer-Kensky, John D. W. Watts, David Weisberg, and Lester H. Cole, and from comments by Lloyd M. Barre, Robert Bayer, Gary Beckman, Charles D. Isbell, Victor (A.) Hurowitz, Gene McGarry, the Persian Period Group of SBL, and anonymous reviewers at *HTR* on earlier drafts. All errors are my own.

¹Charles C. Torrey, *The Second Isaiah* (New York: Scribner's, 1928) 3–52; idem, "Isaiah 41," *HTR* 44 (1951) 121–36; James D. Smart, *History and Theology in Second Isaiah: A Commentary on Isaiah 35, 40–66* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964) 115–34; Jurgen van Oorschot, *Von Babel zum Zion* (New York: de Gruyter, 1993) 88.

²Christopher R. North, *The Second Isaiah* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964) 150; Roger N. Whybray, *Isaiah 40–66* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) 104; Karl Elliger, *Jesaja 40,1–45,7* (BKAT XI/1; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978) 492; John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34–66* (WBC 25; Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1987) 156; Antti Laato, *The Servant of YHWH and Cyrus: A Reinterpretation of the Exilic Messianic Programme in Isaiah 40–55* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1992); idem, *A Star is Rising: The Historical Development of the Old Testament Royal Theology and the Rise of the Jewish Messianic Expectations* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997) 173–85; Hugh G. M.

Cyrus are central to the theory of history presented in the Book of Isaiah.³ Cyrus is the promised redeemer of the Jews. Yet, even these scholars argue that Cyrus's anointing confers a temporary office, and does not evoke a permanent relationship; Cyrus has not converted to YHWHism, and the title should not be translated "Messiah."⁴ Some do admit that the anointing does mean the end of the Davidic monarchy, however. What God once did through David, he now does through Cyrus.⁵

Klaus Baltzer has gone beyond previous investigators in stressing that Deutero-Isaiah has made Cyrus the new David, and has transferred all the dignity of the "anointed one" to a foreign ruler.⁶ At the same time, he agrees that Cyrus's anointing indicates only a temporary mission to rebuild the temple, to rebuild the city of Jerusalem, to release the נָאֵל הַנְּאֵל, and to subdue rulers. Cyrus, although anointed, is not king of Judah, since the royal title מֶלֶךְ is not used. YHWH takes Cyrus by the hand but does not seat him at his right hand, as he does the Davidic king in Psalm 110. Thus, like previous scholars, Baltzer sees Cyrus's role as limited. Moreover, Baltzer does not consider this positive view of Cyrus to be contemporaneous with the reign of the Persian monarch. He sees it against the background of the works of Aeschylus (472 B.C.E.), Herodotus (484–430 B.C.E.), and Xenophon (430–354 B.C.E.), which also exhibit a positive view of Cyrus. He dates Deutero-Isaiah to the time of Nehemiah and argues that the reference to Cyrus as Messiah implies a latent criticism of the present Persian emperor, Artaxerxes I.

I suggest instead that the Deutero-Isaianic writer wrote as a contemporary of Cyrus, and that he wrote to legitimize him as the Davidic monarch, heir to the Davidic throne. The line of the Achaemenid kings would now take the place of the Davidides.⁷ The purpose of the paper is to explore this thesis and to explain the historical background of this event.

Williamson, "The Messianic Texts in Isaiah 1-39," in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (ed. J. Day; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998) 238–70; Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000) 353–54.

³Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969) 10, 159; Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (trans. D. M. G. Stalker; 2 vols.; United Kingdom: Oliver and Boyd, 1965) 2:238–62; John L. McKenzie, *Second Isaiah* (AB; Garden City: Doubleday, 1968) lxvi; Antoon Schoors, *I Am God Your Saviour: A Form-Critical Study of the Main Genres in Is. XL–LV* (VTSup 24; Leiden: Brill, 1973) 270; Rheinhard G. Kratz, *Kyros im Deuterojesaja-Buch* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1991) 15–17; Peter D. Mischall, *Isaiah* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993) 110; Rainer Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period* (trans. J. Bowden; 2 vols.; OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994) 2:414; John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 40–66* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 197.

⁴Westermann, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 160–61; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 2002) 248–49.

⁵E.g., Westermann, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 160–61; Watts, *Isaiah 34–66*, 156.

⁶Klaus Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah: A Commentary on Isaiah 40–55* (trans. M. Kohl; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001) 225.

⁷Sidney Smith, (*Isaiah Chapters XL–LV: Literary Criticism and History* [London: Oxford University Press, 1944] 74) asserts, "If Cyrus was the anointed of YHWH, he had taken the place of

■ The Deutero-Isaianic Writer

Since Duhm, scholars have separated chapters 40–55 from the Isaianic corpus, and have attributed them to a “Second Isaiah” writing between 550 b.c.e., the advent of Cyrus on the world scene, and 539 b.c.e., just before the fall of Babylon.⁸ Citing the putative end of Deutero-Isaiah’s writings (55:11–12), they argue that the fall of Babylon and the release of the Jews is still in the future.⁹ The *terminus ad quem* for them is the Cyrus Edict of 538 b.c.e. According to this view, Isaiah 40–48 is Persian propaganda, and their author even in the entourage of Cyrus himself!¹⁰ Claus Westermann, for example, states that “one can only stand back in amazement at the closeness with which Deutero-Isaiah’s utterances . . . are answered by the mighty sweep of events themselves, with their strongly marked rhythm of rise and fall.”¹¹ I prefer to see them as *vaticinia ex eventu*.

This notion of a single prophet writing between 550 and 539 b.c.e. has been challenged by scholars who argue that these chapters were written over a long period and by more than one person. The Servant Songs as well as chapters 47, 54, and 55 have been assigned to Trito-Isaiah, who is often seen as the redactor of the Deutero-Isaianic book.¹² In spite of severe operations on the text, Isa 45:1 and the rest of the Cyrus Songs have retained their position in the earliest strata of chapters 40–55 and are viewed as the work of a prophet who wrote during or before Cyrus’s Babylonian conquest.¹³

the line of David, and had become the true king of Judah.”

⁸Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaja*, (HKAT III/I; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1922), although Duhm’s view of these chapters was far more complex.

⁹Smith, *Isaiah Chapters XL–LV*, 1; McKenzie, *Second Isaiah*, xviii; Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66*, 3; North, *Second Isaiah*, 4; Smart, *History and Theology in Second Isaiah*, 32; von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2:239 n. 2; J. Alberto Soggin, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (trans. J. Bowdon; OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980) 313; Peter Ackroyd, “The Book of Isaiah,” 329–70; A. Joseph Everson, “Isaiah,” in *Eerdman’s Dictionary of the Bible* (ed. D. N. Freedman; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000) 649; Hugh G. M. Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah: Deutero-Isaiah’s Role in Composition and Redaction* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994) 2; Ronald E. Clements, “The Unity of the Book of Isaiah,” *Interpretation* 36 (1982) 117–29; idem, “Beyond Tradition-History: Deutero-Isaianic Development of First Isaiah’s Themes,” *JSOT* 31 (1985) 95–113; R. N. Whybray, *The Second Isaiah* (OTG; Sheffield: JSOT, 1983) 22; William L. Holladay, *Isaiah: Scroll of a Prophetic Heritage* (New York: Pilgrim, 1978) vii; Robert R. Wilson, “The Community of the Second Isaiah,” in *Reading and Preaching the Book of Isaiah* (ed. Christopher R. Seitz; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988) 53–70; Edgar W. Conrad, “The Royal Narratives and the Structure of the Book of Isaiah,” *JSOT* 41 (1988) 67–81; Paul D. Hanson, *Isaiah 40–66*, (Interpretation; Louisville: John Knox, 1995); Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55*, 93, 249. An exception is Charles C. Torrey (*The Second Isaiah: A New Interpretation* [New York: Scribner’s, 1928] 104), who understands chapters 40–66 to have been written by a single author, within a short amount of time, but in the latter part of the Persian period.

¹⁰Joseph Blenkinsopp, “Second Isaiah—Prophet of Universalism,” *JSOT* 41 (1988) 83–103.

¹¹Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66*, 4–5.

¹²Karl Elliger, *Deuterojesaja in seinem Verhältnis zu Tritojesaja* (BWANT 63; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1933).

¹³Klaus Kiesow, *Exodusstexte im Jesajabuch: Literarkritische und motivgeschichtliche Analysen* (OBO 24; Freiburg: Universitäts-verlag, 1979); Rosario Pius Merendino, *Der Erste und der Letzte:*

Baltzer, on the other hand, argues that the Cyrus material should be dated between 450 and 400 B.C.E.¹⁴ He states that there is no expectation of the renewal of the Davidic dynasty of the kind expressed during the exile (Ezek 34:23–24; 37: 24–25) and afterward (Hag 2:20–23; Zech 4:1–14). The transfer of imperial power to Cyrus, the Persian king, is complete; the person who calls Cyrus “anointed” does not still expect a representative of the Davidic dynasty to appear on the throne. However, these chapters do not assume that the transfer of power from the Davidic to the Persian king is accepted. Isaiah 45:9–13 is a condemnation of those who in shock reject YHWH’s legitimization of Cyrus as the Davidic king. Baltzer shares this understanding of these verses, but avoids assigning them to Cyrus’s contemporaries by assuming the work to be a historical play. Yet, the Cyrus songs are embedded in a framework that presents YHWH as creator of the universe, as the one who is God to the ends of the earth. It is that power alone which gives YHWH the complete freedom to bring Cyrus forth, and to anoint him king. Far from presenting Persian usurpation of Davidic power as fully accepted and as normal, the creation speeches present Cyrus’s arrival as a strange and entirely new event, an event that requires an appeal to God’s freedom to justify it.

Baltzer also sees Deutero-Isaiah’s lack of interest in the temple as another indication of a fifth-century B.C.E. date. Other scholars agree, and delete its mention in 44:28 as secondary.¹⁵ Yet, Cyrus’s primary task, YHWH’s purpose which he was to fulfill, was to rebuild the temple (44:27–28). Emphasis on the rebuilt temple frames Deutero-Isaiah’s work. Isaiah 40 begins with a command to build a highway through the Arabah (v. 3; ie., the desert of Moab, Num 22:1) in order

Eine Untersuchung von Jes 40–48 (VTSup 31; Leiden: Brill, 1981); Jacques Vermeylen, *Du Prophète Isaïe à l’Apocalyptique* (2 vols.; Paris: Gabalda, 1977–78); Hans-Jurgen Hermisson, “Einheit und Komplexität Deuterojesajas. Probleme der Redaktionsgeschichte von Jes 40–55,” in *Studien zu Prophetie und Weisheit* (FAT 23; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck] 1998) 132–57; Roy F. Melugin, *The Formation of Isaiah 40–55* (BZAW 141; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1976); Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–4 and the Post-Exilic Understanding of the Isaianic Tradition* (BZAW 171; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988); Jurgen Van Oorschot, *Von Babel Zum Zion* (BZAW 206; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1993); Wonsuk Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes: The Spirit of God in the Book of Isaiah* (JSOTSup 271; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999); Reinhard G. Kratz, *Kyros im Deuterojesaja-Buch* (FAT 1; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1991); Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55*. Jürgen Werlitz (*Redaktion und Komposition: zur Rückfrage hinter die Endgestalt von Jesaja 40–55* [BBB 122; Berlin: Philo, 1999]), Odil H. Steck (*Gottesknecht und Zion* [FAT 4; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1992]), and Paul Hanson (*Isaiah 40–66*) place the Cyrus songs between 538 and 520 B.C.E.

¹⁴Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 30–31. Watts (*Isaiah 1–33*, xli–xliv) had also argued that the final product is a conscious literary creation, a play, stemming from the period of Artaxerxes I, but including traditions from previous periods. The first readers of this literary creation would have lived during the fifth century B.C.E.

¹⁵McKenzie, *Second Isaiah*; Whybray, *The Second Isaiah*. Blenkinsopp (*Isaiah 40–55*, 247) argues that the restoration of the temple will be a concern only at a later stage (cf. 63:18, 64:11), “from which time the scribal addition, v. 28b, probably derives.”

that YHWH may return to Zion on it. This return would be visible to all flesh (40:5)—a physical event, not a metaphysical or eschatological one.¹⁶ That event is fully realized in 52:11–12,

¹¹Depart! Depart! Go out from there!
Touch nothing unclean.
Go out from the midst of it.
Purify yourselves, you who carry YHWH's vessels.
¹²You shall not go out in haste,
and you shall not go out in flight.
For YHWH shall walk before you;
the God of Israel shall be your rear guard.

To the biblical writer, the return of YHWH's vessels was nothing less than the return of God himself to Judah, and to his temple in Jerusalem (52:6).

For eye to eye, they will see
YHWH's return to Zion.

The restoration of the temple is the high point, the culmination, of the prophet's writings. The ones who return first, who return most dramatically, are those who carry YHWH's vessels—the temple-vessels (52:11). The Isaianic poet, like Ezekiel (e.g., Ezek 10), envisions YHWH to be in Babylon with the exiles. The way of his return is not a ladder connecting Heaven and Earth, but a physical path across the desert; it is a return which will be seen in the flesh (40:3–5).¹⁷

Baltzer argues, thirdly, that Deutero-Isaiah is critical of sacrifice (43:22–28), so that he would not be in favor of restoring the temple. Yet, these verses reproach the people because they had *not* sacrificed; they do not condemn the cult at all: “You did not weary me with the fat of your sacrifices, but you did burden me with your

¹⁶Merendino, *Der Erste und der Letzte*, 32. Blenkinsopp (*Isaiah 40–55*, 181) suggests the road is not for the return of exiles, but for the parousia of YHWH, although I do not know whether he takes this literally. A god cannot return to his temple without priests, the temple staff, and their families to care for that temple. See Avigdor (V.) Hurowitz, *I Have Built You an Exalted House: Temple Building in the Bible in the Light of Mesopotamian and North-West Semitic Writings* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992); idem, “Temporary Temples,” in *Kinattū ū Darāti: Raphael Kutscher Memorial Volume* (ed. Anson F. Rainey et al.; Tel Aviv: Institute of Archaeology, 1993) 37–50; Lisbeth S. Fried, “The Land Lay Desolate: Conquest and Restoration in the Ancient Near East,” in *Between Myth and Reality: Judah and Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period* (ed. Oded Lipschits; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, in press).

¹⁷Numerous authors have noticed the relationship between the way prepared for YHWH in Isaiah 40 and the processions for the gods in Mesopotamia (e.g., North, *Second Isaiah*; Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66*). They stress the differences, and argue that this is a return of YHWH's glory, his כָּבֵד, and should not be taken literally. Yet, the author emphasizes that this is something the flesh will see, meaning it must be taken literally. For more on this see John F. Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth: Divine Presence and Absence in the Book of Ezekiel* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2000), and Fried, “The Land Lay Desolate.”

iniquities,” says YHWH (43:24). That is, had Judah burdened God with sacrifices instead of with sins, he would not have delivered her to destruction.¹⁸

Baltzer argues, finally, that if Deutero-Isaiah had been written during the exile or the return, he would have expected to see the themes of Ezekiel, Haggai, and Zechariah in these chapters. Instead, he sees only the themes of Nehemiah. First, he cites an interest in Jerusalem’s walls (49:16, 17–19; 54:11–14a); yet, a city’s walls stand for the city as *pars pro toto*. God keeps Jerusalem’s walls in mind, because he keeps Jerusalem in mind. To restore the city is to restore her walls. This does not suggest a concern for the walls per se.¹⁹ Second, Baltzer notes an association of the cities of Judah with Jerusalem (40:9–11; 44:26); but such an association does not indicate the period of Nehemiah more than any other period. Although Jerusalem was the most heavily damaged, every city in Judah experienced destruction at the hands of the Babylonians, and captives were taken from every city.²⁰ Baltzer also associates Deutero-Isaiah with the time of Nehemiah because he sees in these chapters a liberation from debt (42:22; 49:8–9, 24–26; 51:13–14); yet, debt is nowhere mentioned. Oppressors—presumably their Babylonian captors—imprison the people, literally or figuratively. He also sees a link between the נָגָדָה community of Ezra and the Diaspora in Isa 49:12, 22–23; 51:1–3, 9–11. Yet, no נָגָדָה community resident in Jerusalem is described, only the return of Jews from the nations to which they have been carried captive or to which they have fled.

Baltzer (who assumes that Moses is the Servant of the Servant Songs) dates Deutero-Isaiah contemporaneously with Nehemiah, since Moses is called the servant of God there (Neh 1:7–8). Nehemiah also calls himself the servant of God when he acts under the authority of Moses (Neh 1:6), and he calls the Jews God’s servants (Neh 1:6, 10). The connection between the people as the servants of God in Nehemiah and the servants (plural) in the book of Isaiah is interesting, but it is more suggestive of Trito-Isaiah and the final redaction of the book than of the Deutero-Isaianic passages, where Moses is never mentioned.

The *terminus a quo* of Isaiah 40–55 is suggested by Cyrus the Great’s Babylonian conquest, as he is mentioned by name at two points (Isaiah 44:28, 45:1). He is associated with the temple’s founding (44:28), and another passage notes the return of the temple vessels (52:11). The *terminus a quo* must be after the return of the first group of exiles under Sheshbazzar, and after the temple foundations

¹⁸So also Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55*, 230–31.

¹⁹The city’s walls were restored during the first return in 539–520 B.C.E. and again in 445 B.C.E. in the time of Nehemiah. City walls required continual repair. See Lisbeth S. Fried, *The Priest and the Great King: Temple-Palace Relations in the Persian Empire* (BJSUCSD; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, forthcoming).

²⁰David S. Vanderhooft, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire and Babylon in the Latter Prophets* (HSM 59; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999); Lipschits, *Between Myth and Reality*.

were laid (Ezra 5:16).²¹ The *terminus ad quem* is equally clear. There is no indication that the temple has been completed, so it must have been written before the dedication of the temple in the sixth year of Darius I. It is likely that the prophet wrote sometime during the reigns of Cyrus the Great and Cambyses, and before the sixth year of Darius. He calls to a dispersed community, to Jews from Babylon and from Egypt as well (49:12). It should be remembered that after the destruction in 586 B.C.E., many Jews were taken captive to Babylon, but many others also fled to neighboring states. The time when the Babylonian captives returned was a time for other refugees to return as well, but the return continued throughout the Persian period.

מֶשִׁיחַ יְהוָה

If these assumptions are correct, someone whom we call Deutero-Isaiah and who lived between 538 and 516 B.C.E. wrote that Cyrus the Persian king was YHWH's anointed, his Messiah. What would he have meant by this? The process of anointing can describe a mechanism of divine selection for a specific task.²² In the priestly writings, the High Priest is described as the "anointed priest," *הַכֹּהן המֶשִׁיחַ* (Lev 4:3, 5, 16; 6:15). In the Deuteronomistic history, Elijah is told by God to anoint Hazael as king of Aram, Jehu son of Nimshi as king over Israel, and Elisha son of Shaphat as prophet in Elijah's place (1 Kgs 19:15–16).

Yet, the phrase "YHWH's anointed" has a much different connotation. This term refers only to the one selected by YHWH to be the legitimate ruler of the Judaean people, either under the United Monarchy or in Judah alone.²³ The phrase *מֶשִׁיחַ יְהוָה*, including variants such as *מֶשִׁיחַ יְהוָה* ("my anointed one") and *מֶשִׁיחַ אֱלֹהִי יַעֲקֹב* ("the anointed one of the God of Jacob"), occurs thirty times in the Hebrew Bible, and half of these occurrences come from the pen of the Deuteronomistic Historian. It refers to Saul ten times (1 Sam 12:3, 5; 24:7 [6] (bis), 11 [10]; 26:9, 11, 16, 23; 2 Sam 1:16); to David three times (1 Sam 16:6; 2 Sam 19:22; 23:1), and to an unnamed king of either the United Monarchy or Judah twice (1 Sam 2:35). To the Historian, "YHWH's

²¹See Fried, "The Land Lay Desolate," where I argue that the foundations of the second temple were laid under Cyrus and Sheshbazzar.

²²Anointing is used to mark selection throughout the ancient Near East, most notably in the context of the selection of wives and the appointment of vassal kings. See Stephanie Dalley, "Anointing in Ancient Mesopotamia," in *Oil of Gladness: Anointing in the Christian Tradition* (ed. Martin Dudley and Geoffrey Rowell; London: SPCK, 1993) 19–25; Ernest Kutsch, *Salbung als Rechtsaktitel im Alten Testament und im alten Orient* (BZAW 87; Berlin: Topelmann, 1963) 1–72; Roland de Vaux, "Le Roi D'Israël, Vassal de Yahvé," in idem, *Bible et Orient* (Paris: Cerf, 1967); S. Thompson, "The Anointing of Officials in Ancient Egypt," *JNES* 53 (1994) 15–25; Daniel Fleming, "The Biblical Tradition of Anointing Priests," *JBL* 117 (1998) 401–14; L. Viganò, "Rituals at Ebla II, i-giš sag: A Purification Ritual or Anointing of the Head?" *JNES* 59 (2000) 13–22.

²³So also Sigmund Mowinckel, *He That Cometh* (trans. G. W. Anderson; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1956) 5, 7.

anointed” is the legitimate king, appointed and protected by YHWH (1 Sam 24:7, 11; 26:9, 11, 16, 23). Outside the Deuteronomistic history, the term is used in Lamentations (4:20) to refer to the last Judean king. It also appears in eight of the psalms, in Habakkuk’s prayer (3:13), and in the prayer of Hannah (1 Sam 2:10).

The term “YHWH’s anointed” is more than a title. It connotes a theology. It refers to the legitimate Judean ruler, divinely installed, divinely protected, even numinous.²⁴ In the psalms, he is idealized, mythical. Psalm 2 has long been recognized as an enthronement psalm, recited at the coronation of a Judean king.²⁵ The phrase in v. 2, “against YHWH and against his anointed,” may be a later gloss on an earlier poem.²⁶ Even so, the psalmist knows that the king is anointed during the installation process, as v. 6 attests: “As for me, I have been anointed²⁷ his king, on Zion, his holy mountain.”²⁸

Psalm 2 opens Book I of the Psalter with a presentation of the preexilic royal Judean court theology surrounding YHWH’s anointed. According to this psalm,

²⁴Frank M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973) 241–73.

²⁵Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship* (trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962) 62–63; Artur Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962) 110; Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms 1:1–50* (AB, New York: Doubleday, 1965) 7; Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1–50* (WBC; Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1983) 63–69; Patrick D. Miller, Jr., *Interpreting the Psalms* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986) 87–93; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1–59: A Commentary* (trans. H. C. Oswald; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988) 126; Susan E. Gillingham, “The Messiah in the Psalms: A Question of Reception History and the Psalter,” in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (ed. John Day; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998) 209–37; William M. Schniedewind, *Society and the Promise to David: The Reception History of 2 Samuel 7:1–17* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) 69–70. Against this, Erhard S. Gerstenberger (*Psalms, Part I* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988] 48–49) argues for a post-exilic setting, stating that the “universalistic and eschatological horizon of Psalm 2 cannot be explained within the aspirations of Israel’s historic monarchies.” Gerstenberger confuses the mythological with the eschatological. It is difficult to position this psalm in a synagogue (as Gerstenberger suggests) and not under a living monarch. Recent work on the psalms stresses their interpretation within the book as a whole. J. Clinton McCann (“Books I–III and the Editorial Purpose of the Hebrew Psalter,” in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* [ed. J. Clinton McCann; JSOTSup 159; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993] 93–107) argues that this psalm was included as part of Psalm 1 to provide a literary context for book I of the Psalter, and for the Psalter as whole. He suggests that it addresses the reality of exile and the continuing threat of the domination of Israel by the nations (p. 103–4). It is difficult to see how a hope that resides in the strength and power of the Davidic king would have much force when such kings no longer reigned. The surrounding nations threatened Judah during the entire course of her existence, not only at the time of the exile. This point was brought out by Jean-Marie Auwers (*La Composition Littéraire du Psautier: Un État de la Question* [Paris, Gabalda, 2000] 72). It is unlikely to have been written during the exile; there is nothing in the psalm that hints of a threat to the monarchy. Auwers argues (pp. 112–13) that the use of the word פְּנָא, “decree,” in Psalm 2 immediately recalls the Davidic covenant, and obligates God to intervene when faced with the collapse of the monarchy. The Davidic covenant as a preexilic theology of kingship seems assured.

²⁶So Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 124.

²⁷Repointing נִזְבֵּחַ as נִזְבֵּחַ, from the root נִזְבַּח, “to anoint,” with Dahood, *Psalms I*, 10.

²⁸“His king . . . his holy mountain.” For a discussion of –y as the third-person pronominal suffix, see Dahood, *Psalms I*, 10.

YHWH has given to his anointed king all the nations of the earth as his inheritance. The psalm describes the relationship between YHWH and the king, and the gifts the new king receives after his anointing:

⁷I will tell of the decree (*פְּנִים*) of YHWH.
 He said to me, “You are my son.
 This day I have given birth to you.
⁸Ask of me, and I will give it:
 Nations are your inheritance,
 and the ends of the earth are your personal property.
⁹You will break them with an iron bar,
 you will shatter them like a potter’s vessel.”

The decree (*פְּנִים*) in v. 7 expresses divine legitimization.²⁹ According to the psalm, the anointing takes place on Mt. Zion when the king becomes YHWH’s son and vassal (vv. 6–7). As Suzerain of all the earth, YHWH gives to his anointed the nations as his inheritance (v. 8).

This theme of sovereignty over the nations is echoed in Psalm 18, in which the voice is that of the reigning Davidic king:

⁴⁴You delivered me from the strife of peoples,
 you set me at the head of nations.
 Peoples whom I do not know serve me,
⁴⁵obeying as soon as they hear me.
 Foreigners cringe before me.
⁴⁶Foreigners shrivel up,
 they quake among their strongholds.

The psalm ends with a doxology (vv. 50–51) that clarifies that the speaker is YHWH’s anointed, the reigning Davidic king. As in Psalm 2, this psalm describes the close relationship between YHWH and his anointed.³⁰ YHWH has given him victory in battle. He has placed him at the head of nations (v. 44); peoples who do not know him serve him (v. 44), they come running as soon as he calls (v. 45). The last verses (38–51) of the psalm exhibit YHWH’s role in the battles of the Davidic king. The anointed king speaks:

³⁸I pursued my enemies and overtook them.
 I did not return until they were consumed.
³⁹I smashed them, they could not rise.
 They fell under my feet. . . .

²⁹So Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, 62–63. Mowinckel argues that this is a written document expressing YHWH’s covenantal relationship with the Davidic scion. I doubt such a written document existed; but certainly there would have been an enthronement ceremony, and this ceremony would have involved anointing. For a discussion of anointing practices in the ancient Near East and Emar in particular, see Fleming, “Anointing Priests,” and references cited there.

³⁰See the references in n. 25, above; see also Steven J. L. Croft, *The Identity of the Individual in the Psalms* (SJOTSup 44; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987) 76.

⁴³I ground them fine as dust in the wind.
 I made them nothing, like the mud of the streets. . . .
⁴⁷YHWH lives! Blessed be my rock!
 Exalted is my saving God,
⁴⁸the God who gives me vengeance,
 who subdues³¹ peoples under me. . . .
⁵¹He makes great the victories of his king,
 and he deals faithfully with his anointed one,
 with David and his seed forever.

YHWH enables the anointed king to strike down his enemies (v. 38); they fall under his feet (v. 39). YHWH gives victory to his anointed, to his king, to David and his seed forever (v. 51). That YHWH ensures victory for his anointed king is repeated in Psalm 20:

⁷Now I know that YHWH has delivered his anointed one.
 He has answered him from his holy heaven
 with mighty victories by his right hand.
⁸Some upon chariots, and some upon horses,
 but we call upon the name of YHWH, our God.
⁹They bow the knee and fall,
 but we rise and stand again.
¹⁰YHWH saved the king,
 He answered us on the day that we called.³²

The psalm is in two strophes: the first (vv. 2–5) is the prayer or petition for the reigning king; the second (vv. 7–10), the thanksgiving for the fulfillment of the prayer. Verse 6 is a transition and could belong to either strophe. The poet asks in v. 3 that YHWH send “help from the sanctuary and support from Zion.” Verse 6 celebrates the answer to that prayer: YHWH has granted victory to his king. The final strophe describes the results of the victory, and the renewed confidence in YHWH’s relationship with his anointed (v. 7). His enemies bow the knee and fall (v. 9). YHWH has saved the king and answered the prayer (v. 10). The Davidic royal theology is reiterated: the king’s enemies have relied on horses and chariots, but the anointed one is victorious, because he relies on the name of YHWH (v. 8).

Psalm 89 also reveals the preexilic theology of the Davidic king. The psalm itself most likely stems from the exile. There is no hope of a return or restoration in it; the exile itself is readily apparent (vv. 39–52).³³ As a whole, the psalm describes

³¹Reading מִלְחָמָה, with 2 Sam 22:48.

³²I assume, with Dahood (*PSALMS I*, 129, citing D. N. Freedman) that this is the normal third-person perfect tense, with the preservation of an archaic 3ms ending.

³³Schniedewind, *Society and the Promise to David*, 111–14. For other opinions see the references in n. 25, plus Nahum Sarna, “Psalm 89: A Study in Inner Biblical Exegesis” in *Biblical and Other Studies* (ed. Alexander Altmann; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963) 29–46; and Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985) 466–67. Schniedewind

the pain of being abandoned by God after the fall of Jerusalem. It suggests that prior to the fall, an eternal Davidic dynasty was expected:

- ³⁹But you have spurned and rejected [him],
burned with wrath against your anointed.
- ⁴⁰You repudiated the covenant with your anointed;
you have defiled his crown in the dust.
- ⁴¹You have breached all his walls,
reduced his fortifications to rubble.
- ⁴²All the passersby have plundered him.
He has become a taunt to his neighbors.
- ⁴³You have raised the right hand of his foes;
you have made all his enemies rejoice.
- ⁴⁴Your wrath turns back his sword blade;
you do not support him in battle.
- ⁴⁵You removed his splendor,
you hurled his throne to the ground.
- ⁴⁶You have cut short the days of his youth.
You have wrapped him in shame. . . .
- ⁵⁰Where, my lord, are your early acts of loyalty
that you swore by your faithfulness to David?
- ⁵¹Remember, my lord, the insult to your servant—
that I bear in my breast [from] many nations
- ⁵²with which your enemies mock, YHWH,
with which they mock the heels of your anointed.

The psalm turns upside down the theology associated with the Davidic king. He is YHWH's anointed (vv. 21, 39, 52), YHWH's servant (vv. 4, 21, 51), but his hand has not been upheld in battle, his sword has been turned back, all his fortified cities have been breached. If it is correct to date this psalm to the exile at the latest, then an exilic Isaianic writer and his audience would have known the Davidic myth, they would have known of an eternal Davidic covenant (v. 29), and they would have experienced the disappointment and rejection of its apparent collapse.

■ Persian Rulers and Local Royal Court Theology

How then, knowing the full theology associated with the term “YHWH’s anointed,” could Deutero-Isaiah have applied it to Cyrus, the Persian emperor? This can be understood against the background of the initial years of the Persian Empire. During

dates the first third of the psalm (vv. 2–19) to the tenth century B.C.E. and the emerging monarchy; the second third (20–38) to the period of Josiah, and the final third to the fall of Judea. Verses 6–15 may have been adapted from an ancient Ugaritic hymn, but I find it difficult to assign vv. 2–5 (which speak of the Davidic covenant) and vv. 16–19 (which refer to God as **אֱלֹהִים קָדוֹשׁ**, the Holy One of Israel) to the tenth century. The latter phrase occurs twenty-five times in the book of Isaiah, and six times in the rest of the *Tanak*. Williamson (*The Book Called Isaiah*, 41–45) concludes that the title originates with the eighth-century Isaianic writer, and is not earlier.

the reigns of Cyrus, Cambyses, and Darius, priests of powerful temples delivered up to their Persian conquerors the titles and ideologies of their local kings.³⁴ In Egypt, for example, the Persian victor became Pharaoh. Cambyses, Egypt's first Persian emperor, was given full Pharaonic titulary by Udjahorresnet, a priest of the temple of Neith in Sais, in Lower Egypt. On his stele, Udjahorresnet states:

I composed his (Cambyses') titulary, to wit his name of King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Mesuti-Re (Offspring of Re).³⁵

Cambyses' entire title, composed of the usual five names, appears in two epitaphs of Apis bulls. The name includes the typical Pharaonic titles plus the throne name composed by Udjahorresnet: "Horus *Sm3-t3-wj* (The Horus who Unites the Two Lands), King of Upper and Lower Egypt, *M3-tjw-Rc* (Son of Re), The Good God, Lord of the Two Lands."³⁶ Like the titulary of previous pharaohs, that of Cambyses proclaims him to be the god Horus. On one stele for the Apis bull, Cambyses is shown in Pharaonic dress kneeling beside an offering table. There, and on the bull's sarcophagus, he is said to perform the appropriate rites to conduct his father, the bull—now Osiris—to the good land of the West.³⁷

Darius continued the tradition started by Cambyses. Darius's titulary can also be seen on an epitaph for an Apis bull. He, too, is shown in Pharaonic dress, kneeling beside the bull, his father, piously ushering him westward.³⁸ The remains of three additional stelae erected to commemorate Darius's completion of his canal at Suez exhibit his use of royal Pharaonic titulary.³⁹ A fragment from one of the stelae states in part: ". . . (Darius) . . . born of Neith, mistress of Sais; image of Re; he whom [Re] placed on his (Re's) throne in order to achieve what he (Re) had begun. . . ."⁴⁰ The inscriptions on these three stelae can be compared to those

³⁴For a discussion of the relationship between local priests and the Persian Emperor, see Fried, *The Priest and the Great King*.

³⁵Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol 3: *The Late Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980) 36–41, esp. p. 40 n. 9.

³⁶Georges Posener, *La première domination perse en Égypte* (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1936) 31. For a discussion of regnal names, see Alan Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961) 50–52, and Jürgen von Beckerath, *Handbuch der ägyptischen Königsnamen* (Münchner ägyptologische Studien 20; München: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1984).

³⁷Posener, *La première domination*, Nos. 3 and 4, 30–36, Pl. II.

³⁸Ibid., Nos. 5, 36–41, Pl. III. Although he does not mention it, Udjahorresnet likely provided Darius's titulary as well.

³⁹Ibid., Nos. 8–10, 48–87, Pl. IV–XV. Diodorus claimed that Darius did not finish the canal (1.33.9); however, the second stele, the stele found 3 kilometers south of Kabret, states "ships filled with . . . arrived in Persia," indicating that it was completed (line 16; ibid., 76). The location of a fourth stele is unknown. See ibid. 48 n. 3; and Christopher Tuplin, "Darius' Suez Canal and Persian Imperialism," *Achaemenid History* 6 (1991) 237–83.

⁴⁰For further discussion and additional bibliography, see Margaret Cool Root, *The King and Kingship in Achaemenid Art: Essays on the Creation of an Iconography of Empire* (Acta Iranica 19, 3d series, vol. 9; Leiden: Brill, 1979) 61–68; Briant, *L'histoire*, 494–95, 973–74.

on the statue of Darius recently discovered at Susa.⁴¹ Like the stelae found at the canal at Suez, this statue is inscribed on one side in three cuneiform languages (Old Persian, Elamite, and Akkadian), and on the other in hieroglyphs. The material is Egyptian granite. Although the figure of Darius is in Persian dress, the work was clearly done in Egypt by master Egyptian artists.⁴²

The emperor wears a broad belt tied in front. On each of the hanging ends of the belt, there is an identifying inscription:

Inscription 1a (on the left end of the belt):

The King of Upper and lower Egypt, Master of the Accomplishments of the Rites, Darius—may he live forever.

Inscription 1b (on the right end of the belt):

The Perfect God, Master of the Two Lands, Darius—may he live forever.

A final inscription is placed on a ledge of the base.⁴³ It is a dedication in five columns, in a framework that conveys the image of the sky:

Inscription 3:

The Perfect God, Master of the Two Lands, King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Darius, may he live forever.—Image made to the exact resemblance of the perfect god, Master of the Two Lands, that His Majesty had made in order that a monument of him might be lastingly established and that one might remember his person, after his father Atum, Heliopolitan Lord of the Two Lands, Re-Harakhte, for the extent of eternity. May the latter accord to him in turn all life and all strength, all health, all joy, as Re commands it.⁴⁴

On this Susan statue, Darius is provided with traditional Pharaonic epithets:⁴⁵ he is Perfect God, chosen by the supreme god, Re, and armed by the mother of this god, Neith. Darius is Atum in effigy (Inscription 3). Both Cambyses and Darius appropriated traditional Egyptian royal court theology. They became the legitimate rulers of Egypt; they became Pharaoh.

The Persian conquerors, Cyrus and Cambyses, appropriated royal court theology in Babylon as well. The Babylonian Chronicle indicates that Cambyses participated in the New Year's Akitu festival as crown prince.⁴⁶ Chronicle 7 III:22–28 reads:

⁴¹Monik Kervran et al., “Une statue de Darius découverte à Suse,” *Journal Asiatique* 260 (1972) 235–66.

⁴²Jean Yoyotte, “Les inscriptions hiéroglyphiques Darius et l’Égypte,” *Journal Asiatique* 260 (1972) 253–65. See also Root, *The King and Kingship in Achaemenid Art*, 68–72. The three Suez stelae and the Susa statue are probably contemporaneous, but their date is disputed. I have translated into English Yoyotte’s French rendition of the hieroglyphic text. I use his inscription numbers.

⁴³I omit Inscription 2 because of its length.

⁴⁴Yoyotte, “Les inscriptions hiéroglyphiques Darius,” 257–59.

⁴⁵Ibid., 259.

⁴⁶Pace Amélie Kuhrt and Susan Sherwin-White, “Xerxes’ Destruction of Babylonian Temples,” in

On the night of the eleventh of the month Marchesvan, Ugbaru died. In the month [. . .] the king's wife died. From the twenty-seventh of the month Adar to the third of the month Nisan [there was] (an official) mourning period in Akkad. All of the people bared their heads. On the fourth day when Cambyses (II), son of Cyrus (II)], went to é.gidru.kalam.ma.sum.ma, the . . . official of Nabû who . . . [. . .] When he came, because of the Elamite (dress?) . . . the hand of Nabû [. . .] . . . [. . .] [sp]ears and quivers from [. . .] . . . crown prince(?) to the [. . .] Nabû to Ésagil . . . before Bēl and the son of B[ēl . . .].⁴⁷

The date is the fourth of Nisannu, the fourth day of the festival, the appropriate date for Cambyses' trip to the temple of Nabû.⁴⁸ Instead of going to the temple in Borsippa as was usual, Cambyses went to the temple of Nabû of the *haru* in east Babylon.⁴⁹ There, he took the hand of the god and prepared to bring him to Bēl and to the gods at the Ésagil. The text breaks off here; there is no information about subsequent days of the festival. Yet, Cambyses evidently did participate in it as crown prince, since he immediately became king of Babylon and shared a coregency with Cyrus. Several texts are dated to the "first year of Cyrus, king of lands, and Cambyses, king of Babylon," ^m*Ku-ra-aš LUGAL KUR.KUR* ^m*Ka-am-bu-zija LUGAL TIN.TIR.*⁵⁰ (BM 55089 [82-5-22, 1421], BM 67848 [82-9-18, 7846], BM 61307 [82-9-18, 1282], etc.).⁵⁰

■ A Divine Quid Pro Quo?

Why did Udjahorresnet give Cambyses and Darius the title Pharaoh? Why did the Marduk priesthood allow Cambyses to participate in the Akitu festival? They were collaborators.⁵¹ Lloyd's study of the inscription of Udjahorresnet provides insight into the thinking of local priests who collaborated so willingly with the Persian conquerors.⁵² The inscription is a first-person account of an Egyptian admiral

The Greek Sources: Proceedings of the Groningen 1984 Achaemenid History Workshop (ed. Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg and Amélie Kurt; Achaemenid History 2; Leiden: Nederlands Instituut Voor het Nabije Oosten, 1987) 79–80, who argue that there is no evidence that any Persian king ever participated in the Akitu festival.

⁴⁷Albert Kirk Grayson, Chronicle 7, col. iii 22–28, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* (1975; reprinted Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2000) 110–11. The name of the temple is emended based on A. R. George, *House Most High: The Temples of Ancient Mesopotamia* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1993) 132 n. 878.

⁴⁸J. A. Black, "The New Year Ceremonies in Ancient Babylon: 'Taking Bel by the Hand' and a Cultic Picnic," *Religion* 11 (1981) 39–59.

⁴⁹George, *House Most High*, 132 n. 878

⁵⁰Stefan Zawadzki, "Cyrus-Cambyses Coregency," *RA* 90 (1996) 171–83.

⁵¹Two people collaborate when they work to achieve shared goals. This is the definition I use in this article. Udjahorresnet and the priests of Marduk collaborated with the Persian invaders to achieve the shared goal of installing the aggressor into power as their own local ruler.

⁵²Alan B. Lloyd, "The Inscription of Udjahorresnet: A Collaborator's Testament," *JEA* 68 (1968)

coming to terms with, and finally aiding, the conquest. Admiral of the Egyptian fleet under the pharaohs Amasis (570–526 B.C.E.) and Psammeticus III (526–525 B.C.E.), Udjahorresnet retained only civilian titles after the Persian onslaught. These titles, perhaps conferred by Cambyses himself, include “scribe, inspector of council scribes, chief scribe of the great outer hall, and administrator of the palace”:⁵³

(I am) the one honored by Neith-the-Great, the mother of god,⁵⁴ and by the gods of Sais, prince, count, royal seal-bearer, sole companion, true beloved King’s friend, the scribe, inspector of council scribes, chief scribe of the great outer hall, administrator of the palace, commander of the royal navy under the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Khenemibre,⁵⁵ commander of the royal navy under the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Ankhkare,⁵⁶ Udjahorresnet.

As Lloyd points out, Udjahorresnet’s primary motivation was very likely self-interest.⁵⁷ He lost his military title with the conquest, but he was able to retain a high-ranking and influential position at court. This is a strong inducement to collaboration. Aggrandizement of personal power would also have motivated the priests of Marduk who were appointed to their positions by Cyrus.⁵⁸

Lloyd suggests a different, more important reason for collaborating with the foreign invaders. Udjahorresnet insists on the fact that Cambyses accepted the traditional model of Egyptian kingship. He describes himself as instrumental in insinuating Cambyses as the legitimate Pharaoh who acts as every king had acted. A section of his stele (lines 24–27; italics mine) reads:

The one honored by the gods of Sais, the chief physician, Udjahorresnet, he says: The king of Upper and Lower Egypt, Cambyses, came to Sais. His majesty went in person to the temple of Neith. He made a great prostration before her majesty, *as every king has done*. He made a great offering of every good thing to Neith-the-Great, the mother of god, and to the great gods who are in Sais, *as every beneficent king has done*. His majesty did this because *I had let his majesty know* the greatness of her majesty Neith, that she is the mother of Re himself.⁵⁹

Cambyses accepted pharaonic status and acted in conformity to it. He restored temple conditions at Sais to their original state and participated in the funerary rites for the Apis bull. Cambyses’ capacity to adopt the Egyptian model of kingship

170–74; the inscription in translation may be found in Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 3: 36–41.

⁵³Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 3:37.

⁵⁴The sun-god, Re.

⁵⁵Throne name of King Amasis.

⁵⁶Throne name of King Psammeticus III.

⁵⁷Lloyd, “The Inscription of Udjahorresnet,” p. 170.

⁵⁸See Fried, “Cyrus and the Priests of Marduk,” forthcoming; and idem, *The Priest and the Great King* (Eisenbrauns, in press).

⁵⁹Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 3:38, emphasis mine.

seems crucial to Udjahorresnet's willingness to collaborate.⁶⁰ It must have been evident to Udjahorresnet that Cambyses really was "Offspring of Re" (line 13), as Udjahorresnet had entitled him, or Re would not have permitted the Persian conquest of Egypt.

This theme of divine complicity is an important component of the literature concerning conquered cities.⁶¹ The god's displeasure in his citizens causes him to abandon the town, leaving it open to conquest and destruction. The restoration of order, particularly the restoration of the *status quo ante*, is proof that the local god has participated in the conquest and has negotiated the restoration of order. Both the Nabonidus Verse Account and the Cyrus Cylinder depict Marduk using Cyrus to bring about the *status quo ante*. The Cyrus Cylinder reads, in part:

From [Babylon] up to the city of Ashur and Susa, Akkad, to the land of Esh-nunna, to the towns Zamban, Me-Turnu, Der up to the region of the Gutians, I returned to (these) sacred cult-cities on the other side of the Tigris, the sanctuaries of which have been ruins for a long time, the gods which live in them and established for them eternal sanctuaries. I (also) gathered all their inhabitants and returned them to their habitations. Furthermore, I resettled upon the command of Marduk, the great Lord, all the gods of Sumer and Akkad whom Nabonidus has brought into Babylon to the anger of the lord of the gods, unharmed, in their chapels, the places which make them happy.⁶²

Like Cambyses' participation in the New Year's festival, Cyrus's return of cult statues to their former sanctuaries and the restoration of those sanctuaries to their former glory is intended to show Marduk's pleasure in the new rulers. The Marduk priests, like Udjahorresnet, assisted the foreign rulers because they were able to see themselves as true to, and in the service of, their god.

In return for their assistance to the Persian conquerors, the priests of Marduk and Neith received a *quid pro quo*. The temple of Neith was rebuilt, and Cyrus exempted the priests of Marduk and the citizens of Babylon from corvée labor:

For the inhabitants of Babylon, [whom] he (Nabonidus) against the will of the gods [put] under the yoke, that was against their social standing, and forced to serve to the point of exhaustion, I provided rest. I abolished their yoke.⁶³

The Persian conquerors did not automatically restore temple cults or grant favors to temple priesthoods.⁶⁴ For example, Udjahorresnet states:

⁶⁰Lloyd, "The Inscription of Udjahorresnet," 174.

⁶¹Mordechai Cogan, *Imperialism and Religion: Assyria, Judah and Israel in the Eighth and Seventh Centuries B.C.* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1974) 10–21.

⁶²Text of the Cyrus Cylinder in Hanspeter Schaudig, *Die Inschriften Nabonids von Babylon und Kyros' des Grossen samt den in ihrem Umfeld entstandenen Tendenzschriften: Textausgabe und Grammatik*, (AOAT 256; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2001) 550–56; my translation. For a full English translation of the Cyrus Cylinder, see ANET, 316.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Fried, *The Priest and the Great King*.

The Great Chief of all foreign lands, Cambyses, came to Egypt, and the foreign peoples of every foreign land were with him. . . . I made a petition to the majesty of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Cambyses, about all the foreigners who dwelled in the temple of Neith, in order to have them expelled from it, so as to let the temple of Neith be in all its splendor, as it had been before. His majesty commanded to expel all the foreigners [who] dwelt in the temple of Neith, to demolish all their houses and all their unclean things that were in this temple.

When they had carried [all their] personal [belongings] outside the wall of the temple, his majesty commanded to cleanse the temple of Neith and to return all its personnel to it, the [. . .] and the hour-priests of the temple. His majesty commanded to give divine offerings to Neith-the-Great, the mother of god, and to the great gods of Sais, as it had been before. His majesty commanded [to perform] all their festivals and all their processions, as had been done before. His majesty did this because I had let his majesty know the greatness of Sais, that it is the city of all the gods, who dwell there on their seats forever.⁶⁵

As is evident, troops of Cambyses had installed themselves in the temple compound. They lived there (probably in the houses of the priests who had been expelled), and profaned the temple with their “unclean things.” The festivals and the processions had ceased. The temple was left standing, but it could no longer function. It had been desecrated. The temple of Neith at Sais was restored to its former position because Udjahorresnet collaborated with Cambyses (and then with Darius), but other Egyptian temples were not so lucky. Data regarding the priesthood of the Temple of Ptah of Memphis support this.⁶⁶ A complete genealogy of the high priests of Ptah at Memphis can be constructed from the Fourth Dynasty up to and including the high priests of the Twenty-sixth Dynasty. A separate genealogy can then be constructed from the Ptolemaic period into the Roman period. The genealogy does not continue across the Persian period but begins anew in Ptolemaic times; there are no priestly names from the Persian period. This is also true for the priests at Heliopolis, Thebes, Amarna, and Thinis. Priests’ names can be tabulated from the predynastic period through the Twenty-sixth Dynasty, and again from Ptolemaic times. There are no names from the Persian period.⁶⁷ These temples ceased to function under the Achaemenids. The Temple of Neith at Sais continued under the Persians only because Udjahorresnet had cooperated with them. He had received a divine *quid pro quo*.

⁶⁵Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 3:37–38.

⁶⁶Charles Maystre, *Les grands prêtres de Ptah de Memphis* (OBO 113; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992).

⁶⁷Mohamed Moursi (“Die Höhenpriester des Sonnengottes von der Frühzeit Aegyptens bis zum Ende des Neuen Reiches,” *Münchener ägyptologische Studien* 26 [1972] 140–46) lists the priests from the end of the New Kingdom to the Ptolemaic period. There are no names from the Persian period. This is also noted for Thebes by Tuplin, “Darius’ Suez Canal and Persian Imperialism,” 267.

■ Cyrus, משיח יהוה

An examination of the undisputed Cyrus songs in the book of Isaiah (Isa 41:1–4; 41:25, 26; 44:24–28; 45:1–8, 9–13; 46:8–11; 48:14–16a) reveals that like Udjahorresnetin Egypt and the priests of Marduk in Babylon, Deutero-Isaiah handed over to Cyrus the royal Judean title of “YHWH’s anointed,” as well as the entire royal Judean court theology associated with it. The Davidic themes of victory for the anointed king, of nations falling under his feet, are now applied to Cyrus. Instead of the Davidic monarch as in Psalms 2, 18, and 20, it is Cyrus, the newly anointed king (Isa 45:1–3), who subdues nations.⁶⁸ The following Cyrus songs illustrate the application of the Davidic theology to Cyrus:

Isa 41:2–4

²Who has stirred up [one] from the East?
 Victory meets him at his feet.
 He places nations before him,
 and he subdues kings.
 He makes their swords [MT sg.] dust;
 like chaff, their bows [MT sg.] are driven.
³He pursues them and passes on safely,
 the path does not touch his feet.
⁴Who performed and did [this],
 calling generations from the beginning?
 I, YHWH, am first, and with the last, I am He.

Isa 41:25

I stirred up [one] from the North, and he has come.
 From the rising of the sun, he is mine.⁶⁹
 He shall trample on rulers as on mortar,
 as the potter treads clay.

Isa 45:1–2

¹Thus says YHWH to his anointed,
 to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped
 to subdue nations before him.
 I have exposed the loins of kings
 to open doors before him—
 gates will not be shut.

⁶⁸So also John A. Motyer (*The Prophecy of Isaiah* [Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993] 357), who cites Psalms 1 and 110.

⁶⁹Vocalized with the Greek as a niphil, “He is called by my name.” However, if the prophet described Cyrus as calling upon YHWH by name, it would not be a problem. The Egyptians described Cambyses and Darius as calling upon the Egyptian gods and the priests of Marduk described Cyrus as calling upon the Babylonian god. These poems do not present Cyrus as he really was, but as at least one man saw him.

²⁴“I will go before you,
and I will give access to their cities [MT obscure].
I will break in pieces the doors of bronze,
and I will cut through the bars of iron.”

Instead of the Davidic monarch, it is now Cyrus for whom YHWH subdues kings, for whom he make their swords dust, their bows like chaff (41:2). He causes Cyrus to trample on rulers like mortar, like the potter treads the clay (41:25); he causes Cyrus to subdue nations and humiliate kings (45:1).

Along with the title “anointed,” Cyrus is called “my shepherd,” the one whom YHWH loves, both epithets of the Davidic king.

Isa 44:24–28

²⁴I am YHWH, who does anything: . . .
²⁶who says to Jerusalem, “Be inhabited!”
and to the cities of Judah, “Be rebuilt!”
and to her ruins, “I set them up.”
²⁸. . . who says to Cyrus, “My Shepherd”;
all my purpose, he will fulfill.
[I am] the one who says to Jerusalem, “Be rebuilt!”
and to the temple, “Be refounded!”

Isa 48:14b–15

¹⁴YHWH loves him.
He performs his purpose against Babylon,
and his arm is against the Chaldeans.
¹⁵I, even I, have spoken,
I myself have called him.
I have brought him,
so his way shall succeed.

It is now Cyrus as YHWH’s shepherd—not the Davidic king—who fulfills YHWH’s purposes (46:11; 48:14–15). YHWH’s purpose is clear:

Isa 45:13

¹³“I will arouse him [Cyrus] in righteousness,
I will make all his paths straight.
He shall rebuild my city,
and send out my exiles—
and not for a price and not for a bribe,”
Says YHWH of Hosts.

In these poems, Cyrus is YHWH’s anointed, his shepherd, his beloved, and the one who fulfills all his purposes. YHWH takes Cyrus by the hand, and him alone he calls in righteousness (or in legitimacy). These are the titles of the Davidic monarch. By

so labeling him, the writer proclaims Cyrus and his descendants to be the legitimate Davidic kings, rightful heirs of David's line.

I suggest that his audience understood this and was aghast. How could the prophet imply that God had handed over to a foreigner a theology which belonged to the Davidic king? The prophet rebukes them. YHWH has made heaven and earth, he has made them; he will do as he pleases (Isa 45:9–13):

⁹Woe to the one who strives with his Maker,
 [who is but] a vessel [like] vessels of earth!
 Does the clay say to the one who fashions it,
 “What are you making?” or “Your work has no handles”?
¹⁰Woe to anyone who says to a father, “What are you begetting?”
 or to a woman, “With what are you in labor?”
¹¹Thus says YHWH, the holy one of Israel, and its Maker:
 “Will you question me about my children,⁷⁰
 or command me concerning the work of my hands?
¹²I made the earth, and I created humankind upon it.
 It was my hands that stretched out the skies,
 and I commanded all their host.
¹³I will arouse him [Cyrus] in righteousness,
 I will make all his paths straight.
 He shall rebuild my city,
 and send out my exiles—
 not for a price and not for a bribe,”
 says YHWH of Hosts.

■ Conclusions

Like Udjahorresnet and the priests of Marduk, Deutero-Isaiah delivered up to the Persian conqueror the entire theology that had defined the local king. His purpose was the same: to facilitate local acceptance of the foreign ruler. The reasons that motivated those priests would have motivated Deutero-Isaiah as well. Self-interest was no doubt one reason for his actions, but not his sole motivation. Like his counterparts in Egypt and Babylon, Deutero-Isaiah was convinced that Cyrus was in actuality the genuine Judean king, i.e., YHWH's anointed, his Messiah, because

⁷⁰Emending **הָאֲתִי תְּשַׁלֵּחַ שְׂאָלוֹנִי** to **הָאֲתִי תְּשַׁלֵּחַ שְׂאָלוֹנִי** with BHS.

Cyrus was able to do what a legitimate king must do: he brought back the *status quo ante*. He rebuilt the temple, ordered the temple vessels replaced in it, and permitted the Jews to return to worship their God in Zion restored.⁷¹

⁷¹The argument presented here does not depend on the accuracy of the Isaianic writer, only that he believed that Cyrus would restore the *status quo ante*. But see Fried, “The Land Lay Desolate,” in which I argue that the temple was indeed rebuilt, the vessels restored, and the people returned under Cyrus. For a full discussion of all these issues, see Ephraim Stern, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*, vol. 3: *The Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian Periods (732–332 B.C.E.)* (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 2001) 312–26; idem, “The Babylonian Gap: The Assyrians Impressed their Culture on Israel . . . The Babylonians Left No Trace,” *BAR* 26 (2000) 45–51,76; Charles E. Carter, *The Emergence of Yehud in the Persian Period: A Social and Demographic Study* (JSOTSup 294; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999) 225; Vanderhoof, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire*; and most recently, Lipschits, *Between Myth and Reality*.